

Every year, Kunstenfestivaldesarts brings (inter)national artists, programmers and audiences together in different venues in our city. The day scheduled for the announcement of the upcoming edition arrives in an unprecedented situation of crisis for our society and the world at large.

While we are writing these words, we are at home, collaborating with our fellow citizens to slow down the virus and the risks it implies for the most vulnerable among us. While we are writing, we see our city transformed into an unusual immobilized landscape in which public spaces, schools, shops, restaurants, bars and all theatres and cultural institutions have closed their doors to prevent the virus from spreading. While being in complete solidarity with the measures that have been taken by the federal government, we want to express our thorough support to all the artists, venues and organisations – among which the close partners of the festival – that are affected by this crisis.

As an international festival, we are following closely what happens in other contexts such as South Korea, Italy, China and Iran. A lot of the artists that were creating new projects for the upcoming edition are living there and we are in contact with them on a daily basis. It's inevitable that this situation will affect our global mobility, putting the idea of an international festival under pressure.

Each edition of Kunstenfestivaldesarts is the result of a 1,5 year long preparation. It starts by encounters and conversations with artists about projects they are only dreaming of, and do not exist yet. Slowly but surely, these creations take shape in dialogue with our Brussels' partners and our passionate team that takes care of the production, mediation, administration, technique and communication, in order to finally share the projects with the audience.

It is out of respect for all these people – our artists, the team members, the partners and the interns that have worked so hard on this year's edition – that we proudly decided to share today the program with you. Faced with a lot of uncertainty about how the situation will evolve, we are working synchronously on three different scenarios to present Kunstenfestivaldesarts 2020. A final decision will be made at the beginning of April.

In the most optimistic scenario, a part of the festival can take place in the foreseen timeframe from 8th—30th of May. Of course, many artistic creations will be highly affected by the measures taken to slow down the spread of the virus and won't be able to be presented in the way we imagined them to. And even more important: we will seek for professional advice when making the decision; guaranteeing the health and safety of the public, employees and artists is the first and most important factor to take into consideration.

In the second scenario, we would move the festival to a later period in the year. We are currently discussing with our team, the artists and our partners to explore the possibility of this new development.

In the third scenario, which is also the least preferred of all, we would have to cancel this year's edition, totally. In that case, we would look into the possibility to re-invite the 18 coproductions of 2020 and create an XL celebratory 25th edition in May 2021.

Kunstenfestivaldesarts is a creation festival. Most of the artistic projects presented are shared with an audience for the first time. These days, we follow up the artists and their work very closely and, even in the last scenario, we will try our best to fairly remunerate everyone (artists, freelancers and the festival staff...) that has been working over the past months, and was supposed to work in the following ones, to make this festival happen.

The cultural field in Brussels is badly affected, with an unseen lockdown that forces theaters and museums to close for weeks, maybe months. But this crisis transcends the sphere of arts and culture. We want to express our solidarity with all people affected. These are difficult times for everybody, but even more so for the ones who are not protected by our social system. We can only hope for decisive reactions from the different governments to make sure we come out of this crisis stronger. On the following pages, you'll find the press file as it was conceived one month ago, at the end of February.

Brussels, the 20th of March 2020

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